

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheet(s) of drawings includes changes to Fig. 1. No new matter has been added.

Attachment: Replacement sheet

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claim 1 has been amended, and claims 3-5 have been cancelled. Accordingly, claims 1 and 2 are pending in the present application.

The Office Action's indication that the references cited in the specification have not been considered is noted. In response, Applicant submits herewith form PTO/SB/08A listing the reference cited in the specification. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner consider and officially make of record the reference cited in the attached form PTO/SB/08A.

The objection to the drawings is noted. In response, Applicant submits herewith a revised drawing sheet with Fig. 1 labeled as prior art. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

The objection to claims 1 and 4 are noted. In response, claim 1 has been amended as helpfully suggested by the Examiner, and claim 4 has been cancelled. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. In response, claims 3-5 have been cancelled, and claim 1 has been amended to be in full compliance with all §112 requirements. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,490,836 to Moriau et al. This rejection is deemed moot with respect to claims 3-5 due to their cancellation. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection with respect to claims 1 and 2.

Among the limitations of independent claim 1 which are neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art of record is a fracture-proof flat clasping floorboard piece wherein "a V-shaped groove is provided in a lower surface of the slot mortise and a corresponding convexity is provided on a lower surface of the tenon; the convexity, in an insertion direction of the tenon, has an anti-

self-locking oblique surface formed on a front end thereof; the anti-self-locking oblique surface forms a first angle with an upper surface of the floorboard strip; the first angle ranging from 15-35°.”

As described in the present specification, and shown in Fig. 2, the oblique surface 116 and the anti-self-locking oblique surface 124 form a first angle with an upper surface of the floorboard strip that ranges from 15-35°. The benefit to the use of such an angle is that the floorboard strips can be assembled in flat form, i.e., horizontal assembly, and do not require rotation during installation. This, in turn, helps prevent fracturing of the mortise and tenons during shipping and installation.

Moriau et al. does not teach or suggest the claimed first angle required by independent claim 1. Specifically, there is not teaching or suggestion in Moriau et al. that the surface 83 has an angle between 15-35°. This is because, as shown in Fig. 24 and described at col. 11, lines 5-28, it is preferred that the floor panels of Moriau et al. are assembled with rotational movement so as to eliminate the need for a tool during assembly. While Moriau et al. does describe that the floor panels can be assembled in a lateral movement, such an assembly of the floor panels of Moriau et al. causes unnecessary deflection of the lower portion of the mortise as shown in Fig. 25. This causes an undue amount of stress on the floor panels during installation.

In contrast, with use of the surfaces 116 and 124 at an angle of 15-35°, the present invention provides a sufficient depth of tenon introduction into the mortise, and easy and secure horizontal assembly. Moriau et al. simply does not recognize the optimal angle of 15-35° specifically set forth in independent claim 1. Therefore, it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the Moriau et al. floor panel to have the surface 83 at an angle of 15-35° but for Applicant’s disclosure of this optimal range. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the prior art of record.

Claim 2 depends directly from independent claim 1 and includes all of the limitations found therein, as well as additional limitations which, in combination with the limitations of claim

1, are neither disclosed nor suggested in the art of record. Accordingly, claim 2 is likewise patentable.

In view of the foregoing, favorable consideration of the amendments to claim 1, and allowance of the present application with claims 1 and 2 is respectfully and earnestly solicited.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments